Highly Individualized Practices Series:
Preventing Suspension and Expulsion of Children with Disabilities

Janie Koslowski: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to our first Inclusion Webinar Series. This webinar is on Preventing Suspension and Expulsion of Children with Disabilities or Suspected Delay. My name is Janie Koslowski, and I'm joined by my co-presenters Anita Allison and Colin Gasamis from NCECDTL. We're with the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, and we're pleased to welcome you to this webinar.

Before we get started, we'd like to do some housekeeping items because we'll be using some of the ON24 features during the webinar. For the best viewing experience, we recommend that you use a wired Internet connection and that you close any other programs or browser sessions running in the background that could cause issues. Webinars are what they call bandwidth-intensive, so closing any unnecessary browser tabs are going to help you conserve your bandwidth. This webcast is being streamed through your computer, so there is no dial-in number. For the best audio quality, please make sure your computer speakers or your headsets are turned on and the volume is up so you can hear the presenters. Some networks cause slides to advance more slowly than others, so logging off your VPN is recommended. If your slides are behind, push F5 on your keyboard, and that will refresh your page. An on-demand version of this webcast will be available 24 hours after the webinar, and you can access it using a link that we'll send to you by email.

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If you have any questions during the webcast, you can submit them through the purple Q&A widget. We will try to answer these questions during the webcast, but if a fuller answer is needed, or if we run out of time, it will be answered later via email. Please note we do capture all questions. A copy of today's slide deck and additional resources are available in the resource list, which is the green widget. We encourage you to download the resource, the PowerPoint slides, if you find that will be useful. Throughout the session, we will be using the blue chat widget to engage with each other. I see that some of you have already found this widget, but you can find additional answers to some common technical issues located in the yellow help widget at the bottom of your screen. Keep in mind that this webinar is also being transcribed, and the transcription will be posted on the ECLKC. Thank you all again for joining us today.

So next, we're going to move into the objectives that we have for this session. I want to point out right away that this session is specific to children with disabilities. It's not strictly about children with challenging behavior, but we're looking at suspension and expulsion issues related to that population of children. We're going to understand the research together.

We're going to talk about the definitions, what we mean by suspension and expulsion, and we're going to share how effective teaching practices and program practices can help prevent suspension and expulsion of children with disabilities. And finally, we're going to understand the protections and the regulations, laws, and rights under IDEA and Head Start performance standards. So, this is our session agenda.

You'll see we'll start by talking about the data and what it tells us about suspension and expulsion of children with disabilities or suspected delays. Then we'll talk about some definitions. We'll talk about what those look like or what the laws and regulations say, and then we're going to have some scenario activities where we'll read you a scenario, and you'll think about some effective teaching practices that could be helpful and share those in the chat box. We'll also talk about program strategies, and hopefully, we'll have time for you to also reflect on your work and think about your next steps.

So, let's start with the data. What does the research tell us about suspension and expulsion of young children with disabilities or suspected delays? Well, suspension and expulsion of young children is a widespread problem. Data show that preschool children are expelled at least three times more than school-aged children. Within the K–12 population, children with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension than children without disabilities.

We don't have good research on the preschool population, so we have to make some inferences from the K–12 population. Walter Gilliam reflected on this practice in recent research by stating that "Suspending and expelling children in preschools runs counter to the mission of school readiness and shifts the focus away from early education of children that need the most help." Children who are expelled from school miss out on critical opportunities to develop and practice skills by participating in the daily curriculum, socializing with other children, and interacting with positive adult role models. Behavior problems in early childhood that are not addressed may lead to ongoing problems and difficulty with school later on and even may cause the child to take on a negative view about learning in general.

Research also shows that early expulsion and suspension predicts later suspension and expulsion. The data consistently show racial disparities, and boys of color experience suspension and expulsion at much higher rates as well. This is not what Head Start is about. Head Start is about inclusion, not exclusion. We're learning a lot about our social connections and how important they are. Our brains are evolved to experience threats to our social connections or rejection in a lot of the same way that they experience physical pain. They activate the same neurocircuitry that causes us to feel physical pain. Our experience with social pain helps us ensure our survival. It has an evolutionary basis. There's a link between social and physical pain, and the signals in our brains for emotional pain are the same as they are for physical pain.

Just think about it. When we were hunter-gatherers — oops. When we were hunter-gatherers and living in tribes, children and adults would not survive if they didn't have strong social ties. If a person didn't connect socially with the group, or if they were ostracized, they wouldn't have the warmth of the gathering, the protection of fire, or the communal experience of eating together and finding food together as a group. The painful feeling of not being connected to other people is sort of an early warning signal. The more painful the experience of rejection, the more likely humans were to change their behavior to avoid ostracism or rejection and to be able to survive and pass on their genes. This evolutionary basis ensures that staying socially connected will be a lifelong need just like food and water and warmth.

So, as we said, suspension and expulsion are the opposite of inclusion. They are exclusion. What does exclusion feel like? Well, researchers recently used neuroimaging to find out. They did this through a game that's called Cyberball, and this is the name of the study that you can find online. It's called, "Does

Rejection Hurt?" So, what they did is they told participants that they were going to be playing a game with two other participants. This was the cover story for the first MRI scan that they did.

So, imagine you're a participant, and you're hooked up to an MRI, and you're watching this cover story. The researchers said, "You're going to be playing a virtual ball-tossing game called Cyberball." They told them that they were not yet hooked up but that when they did get hooked up, the ball would be tossed to them. And so in reality, there were no other participants. The study participants were playing with a preset computer program. And they were given this cover story to ensure that they believed that the other players were real. The participants were wired to the MRI, and two scans were acquired. In the first scan, participants watched the other players play Cyberball. That's that last slide.

That slide showed what the brain looks like when a participant is just watching the game but doesn't feel excluded. In the second scan, which is what the players were watching during this slide, participants played with the other two players. This slide shows what that experience looked like to the participants. They were tossed the ball, and then the ball was tossed to the two other participants in the study, which, as we know, were not real. And then after the ball was tossed to them about seven times, they were excluded from the game. So, after their seven tosses, the two players stopped throwing the study participant the ball for the remaining of the scan, about 45 throws.

Afterwards, participants filled out questionnaires asking how excluded they felt during that portion of the scan and what their level of social distress was like during that latter portion of the game. So, what did they find out? Well, the researchers discovered that our brain patterns on the MRI scans during the exclusion period of the game were exactly the same as the brain patterns found in studies of what brain experiences during episodes of physical pain. Basically, they learned that social pain is felt and experienced by the brain in just the same way that physical pain is experienced. Rejection hurts. Intuitively, we know this, and we even have metaphors to describe this phenomenon. We say, "My heart is broken. My feelings are hurt." When we feel social pain, a snub, or a cruel word, that feeling is as real as physical pain.

So, if we think about that in terms of suspension and expulsion, that feeling of exclusion is really heightened within suspension and expulsion, and Anita is going to share with us some of the definitions that describe the different types of suspension and expulsion. Anita?

Anita Allison: Thank you, Janie. This is Anita, and we're going to define suspension and expulsion because it's important for us to take what Janie said and say, "Well, what does that really mean?" So, the next slide shows what we mean by suspension and expulsion for this webinar. Suspension is the temporary removal of a child from the classroom, program, or school, and expulsion refers to the permanent removal of a child from the program.

You see here on the slide four different types of suspension and expulsion — two regarding suspension and two regarding expulsion. The first is in-school suspension, and those are practices that involve removing or excluding the child from the classroom. Then we have out-of-school suspension, which are practices that involve temporarily removing children from the program. Then we have soft-expulsions. Those are practices that make it so the program is not a viable or a welcoming care arrangement for the family, and it leaves the family with little choice but to withdraw their program.

Then, lastly, we have expulsion itself, and that's the permanent removal or dismissal from the program altogether. It's really important to note here that any suspension or expulsion is the removal of a child from the daily activities and schedule of the class. That means a child no longer has access to the curriculum and activities of the day, and for children with disabilities or suspected delays, this is particularly detrimental as consistency and care, relationships, and the curriculum have an important impact on learning. And when children don't have access to that or have a lag in it because of a suspension, then the child is not getting maximum benefit out of the program.

So, real quickly, I know I went over those real quickly, so I'm going to do a quick check-in and ask you which definition best describes in-school suspension? Is it practices that involve temporarily moving children from the program? Is it permanent removal or dismissal from the program? Or are they practices that involve removing or excluding the child from the classroom? In-school suspensions.

Janie: That's a good question, Anita. You know, it's more complicated than you might think with the different definitions, don't you think?

Anita: Yes, and I'm going to have an opportunity to show you here in a minute the different examples that programs or classrooms use when using these four types.

Janie: Wow.

Anita: So, I think we've had — Yeah, you can just click one of those boxes right on the screen, one of those choices right on the screen, and I think — I think most people have had a chance. Let's look at and see what people —

Janie: Make sure you hit the submit button at the bottom of the slide.

Anita: Oh. Oh, yes. Thank you, Janie. You can hit the submit button at the bottom of the slide to record your response. I'll give it another second for those who just figured that out. And we will now show the results. So, we have about 13 percent saying that it's temporarily removing children from the program. Just not quite 2 percent saying permanent removal, and 85 percent saying that practices that involve removing or excluding the child from the classroom. For those that were listening really closely as I went through those quickly, the last one is correct — practices that involve removing or excluding the child from the classroom.

That is the definition of an in-school suspension. So, that was just a quick check-in, and we're going to go over these now in a bit more detail so that you can fix these four types in your head and see examples of how those practices actually play out in the classroom or in the program and ask yourself, have these examples ever been something you've experienced or seen experienced or witnessed happening in classrooms or programs that you've been involved with or heard about?

So, let's start with practices that involve removing or excluding the child from the classroom, that in-school suspension. You might hear examples of this is asking a child, "Let's go take a walk with Ms. Carrie for a bit. I think you need a break." You know, it sounds really nice, but it's an example where you're just removing the child for an unspecified amount of time, and they don't have access to what's going on in the classroom. Or you might have someone say, "You need to go sit with Mrs. Carol down in the office until you can be calm again," and again —

Janie: That's a common one, or sometimes I hear they send them down to the family service worker's office or something like that.

Anita: Yeah. It's probably the most common. Particularly, I know it happens sometimes in Head Start, but in child care, it happens a lot, so we need to be careful how we utilize that because, again, it's removing the child from those experiences, those opportunities to be involved in the daily activities and routines of the classroom, so they don't have opportunities for learning to happen. So, those are some examples of in-school suspension.

Some practices that involve temporarily removing children from the program may look like this. "We'll have to have Mom pick you up early today," so the program calls Mom one or two hours before dismissal and picks the child up, and this happens on a fairly regular basis, and what happens when you ask a parent to pick that child up all the time is they consistently miss that one or two hours in the late day of the program, and that child doesn't know what's happening.

It may be a fun activity like outdoor play or gym time or, you know, larger gross-motor time. It might be sometimes where a child really needs that experience, and we're not offering that opportunity for children. Another example might be telling the parents that maybe their child should only attend half days because she or he is not ready for more, and when you're thinking about a child missing a big chunk of the time, like half days every other day or maybe only going every other day, that really is limiting the child and big gaps in leaning can happen compared to what the other children are getting. So, these are practices that are happening, and no one is intending to be cruel or mean, but they do happen, and it is a form of exclusion and suspension.

Let's talk about soft-expulsion. These are practices that make it so the program is not viable or welcoming, and the care arrangement for a child or family become complicated or hard, and so the program self-selects to withdraw from the program. An example of that is that Mom is asked so often to pick a child up that she has to leave work, and to do so so many times is jeopardizing her job, so for the benefit of the financial aspects of the family, she withdraws — she chooses to withdraw the child from the program. So, that kind of example is making it so hard on the family they have little choice but to withdraw the child for financial benefit.

Another example might be that the program doesn't tell the family that they just don't have the right kind of services to support their child effectively, so the child might be better getting that somewhere else. And so again, the family wants to make sure the child has access to everything to support their learning, so they selectively choose to withdraw the program because maybe thinking another program would have better options for them. And again, those are examples of the child no longer has access until a parent can find another place.

And the fourth type, some examples of permanent removal or dismissal from the program are that, you know, programs just tell the parents the child is no longer welcome to attend because they've tried, and it's just not working out. So, that doesn't happen as often, which I'm glad to know, but it does happen, and so children with IEPs, they have protections under the law that we really need to examine. And so when you think about these four types of practices that are occurring, we have to understand that there are laws and regulations that prohibit or, you know, really say this is not allowed, and so we need to understand what our laws and regulations say about these practices.

So, now that we've defined them, let's say how we can ensure that we're following laws and regulations regarding suspension and expulsion. And to get us started, I have a true-false question here for you to submit your answer. It's pretty easy. The Head Start Performance Standards require programs to severely limit or prohibit suspension and prohibit expulsion of all enrolled children. This standard refers to all children including children with disabilities or suspected delays.

Is that a true or false statement? And you can click one, and hit the submit button to record your answer, and we'll give you a few minutes to — a few minutes, a few seconds to record your response. And we'll let you know how everyone did. And while they're recording their responses, Janie or Colin, did you have any examples you wanted to share about the four types of suspension and expulsion or any comments you'd like to make?

Janie: Oh, Anita, I thought your examples were really good. You know, I think oftentimes when we hear those terms, our mind immediately goes to what that looks like in elementary school or even middle school. You know, when we think suspension, we think about a child having to be in the library doing their homework, and clearly, that's not the case in early childhood, but suspension can be just as painful. And especially given the age of children that we're serving in Head Start, those early experiences are really powerful and can be painful not only for the child but also for the family. So, I thought your examples were great.

Anita: Thanks, Janie. It's important that we realize that when we say some of the things, what are we actually doing to children when we have heard caregivers say these things or teachers say these things? It's really important that we realize the impact that that has. So, thanks, everyone, for submitting your responses, and let's see what everybody said. 95.6 percent people indicated that this is a true response, and 4.4 percent indicated that this is a false statement.

Well, let's go and look at our laws, and let's see. What do the laws and regulations say about these practices? That if you responded "True," you were absolutely correct. The Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.17(a) and (b) require programs to severely limit or prohibit suspension and prohibit expulsion of all enrolled children, and this standard refers to all children including children with disabilities or suspected delays.

So, the Head Start Performance Standards really ask you to look at your — how you are severely limiting suspension and prohibiting expulsion for all children. Then we have children that are protected under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and these are children that — with IEPs that have been deemed eligible to receive services under IDEA Part B — Assistance for All Children with Disabilities, and according to the law, even for children 3 to 5 years old, programs for children that are receiving services must implement reasonable modifications to programs — reasonable modifications to policies, practices, or procedures to ensure that children with disabilities are not suspended or expelled because of their disability-related behaviors.

And if the child's behavior impedes the child's learning or that of others, the IEP team must consider behavioral intervention strategies to fully include the child and use positive behavioral interventions and support, and a lot of these strategies from positive-behavior intervention and supports come from something similar to the pyramid model that's often used in Head Start.

So, we want to make sure that when children actually are receiving services under IDEA that they are accorded those protections and must be allowed to ensure that their child is not expelled because of a disability-related behavior, and if we need to address it and revisit it, the team comes together and says, "What can we do to continue to help support this child in being in the program?"

Next, we have Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the key provisions of Section 504 is that individuals with disabilities cannot be excluded from participation and denied benefits of or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Accommodations may be required under Section 504 to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not excluded. And finally, the Americans with Disabilities Act Public — Title III Public Accommodations and Commercial Facilities ensures that equal opportunity to participate in programs and services is provided to children with disabilities and their parents. Children with disabilities and families cannot be excluded from their programs unless their presence would pose a direct threat or require a fundamental alteration of the program.

Reasonable modifications have to be made to policies and practices to integrate children, parents and guardians with disabilities into programs unless doing so would constitute a fundamental alteration. So, it's really important that we understand what the laws and regulations say about some of these practices that are related to the definitions and how people are playing this out in the programs, and so I recommend that you look at these regulations and see how is your program, you know, embedding these laws and regulations and making sure that children are protected under these laws and regulations related to suspension and expulsion.

So, now it's time in our presentation to turn it over and to talk about some case studies, and I'm going to turn it over to Colin to introduce our activity.

Colin Gasamis: Thanks, Anita, and thanks, Janie. So, we have some great foundation into what a suspension is, so hopefully we've broadened your understanding a bit. Now, we're going to introduce some scenarios just to give you a wider view of how — scenarios where a suspension can be in place and then also some ways to prevent it in your program.

Janie: Yes, and, Colin — Colin, I'm sorry to interrupt. I just want to make sure that we're all clear about using the question-and-answer widget that you can find at the bottom of your screen if you have questions. I'm seeing some questions pop up on the chat. We're going to use the chat for this activity, so if you have questions, put them in the question-and-answer widget, and we will get to those. But now we're going to use the chat. Colin is going to share these scenarios, and what we'd like for you to do is think about what types of questions you have about the scenario and what kinds of strategies you might use to support the child. So, Colin, tell us about Joey.

Colin: Thanks, Janie. So, Joey is a 4-year-old with a developmental disability. During circle time, he avoids sitting with the group, and when he does join, he quickly becomes restless. His fidgeting regularly disrupts the experience for other children, and the teacher finds that she is constantly telling him to settle down. When the teacher feels his behaviors are too distracting, a volunteer is asked to walk Joey up and down the hall for the remainder of circle time. So, think about that scenario for a moment.

Janie: Yeah, that sounds really familiar, doesn't it? It's similar to the example that Anita gave earlier about walking the child up and down the hallway. It's a form of in-school suspension. So, what are some

of the teaching strategies that you might use to support Joey so he can remain in the classroom? What strategies have you used in your own classroom?

Colin: And just as a reminder, you can use the chat box to enter your questions in for this scenario.

Janie: Yeah. You know, and I think oftentimes, we hear this scenario, and it brings up even more questions, so let's think about what kinds of questions you would want to consider for Joey's teacher to consider. Oh, actually, we're seeing a lot come in. So, preferential seating, fidget toys. Anita, that's something that we have talked about quite often is about using fidget toys so that the child has something to do with his hands during the activity.

Anita: Yeah, fidget toys are one of my favorite because it really — When children — Sometimes, children need to be moving their hands in order to engage their minds, and I think that having fidget toys available for young children is a great strategy as we try to get children to focus and stay within the activity that we've provided for children.

Janie: Absolutely. Absolutely. There are some great suggestions here. The wiggle chair that we've talked about before so that if he needs to move his body, he has a wiggle cushion. You know, sometimes when we talk with teachers about this they say, "But what if the other children want a wiggle cushion?" and what Anita and I usually say is, "Well, let's get more than one wiggle cushion." If others want to try it, they can.

Colin: I think that's a great point, Janie, and that's also a way you can leverage, sort of, models using the accommodation appropriately for children that have a harder time staying in the activity.

Janie: Yeah.

Colin: It's an appropriate model to peers is great.

Janie: Yeah, using peers, and, Colin, there's several people that are commenting about peer support and also being a helper during circle time. I think some of the other comments involved, what length of time is Joey expected to sit? And so we want to keep in mind that young children have short attention spans, and that's developmentally okay. You know, that's where children are in preschool, and so we wouldn't expect a child Joey's age to sit in circle time for really more than 10 or 15 minutes, you know, unless you're doing some sort of very engaging game.

Colin: And I would just add to that, Janie, that when we're developing a plan for a child that has a difficult time sitting, we might want to take some initial data and see how long they can do it before they move, and then over time track different ways that we can use practices to increase that time.

Janie: And that's a great point. So, maybe he can only sit for two minutes the first time, but he works his way up, and after a month or so, he's able to sit for five minutes.

Colin: Yeah.

Janie: I wonder, also, about Joey's expectations of circle time. You know, does he really understand what's expected of him, and what are the appropriate behaviors during circle time? That might be something that would be helpful as well. I've also seen teachers use carpet squares on the floor so that children have a sense of what physical space is theirs. Those visual cues can be really helpful for children especially since they're just learning language. Another idea is to really tap into Joey's interests.

When I was a teacher, I remember I had a child that was also really wiggly during circle time, but he loved dinosaurs, and so I tried to incorporate dinosaurs into my circle time at least for the first month or so because he just — He became really focused and attentive when we talked about them, so it was a way for him to practice and get a sense of what those expectations were. So, these are really fabulous ideas.

I'm going to move us along, and we want to share a video with you. This is a strategy that you might use with a child that's exhibiting challenging behavior during circle time. It's called a social story, and so the social story is really just a description of a situation, a concept, or a social skill, and it's individualized for every child.

So, we're going to show this video, and you'll get to see Gabby. (Video begins)

[Children speaking indistinctly]

Teacher: Max and Cindy. It says here, "I had a turn being child of the day." Who had a turn? Christian. Sierra. Gabby had a turn.

Gabby: No, I not!

Teacher: Gabby. Gabby, look. You had a turn being child of the day.

Gabby: No, I did not.

Teacher: Who else had a turn?

Boy: Me.

Emma: I did.

Teacher: Emma. Benji. Dusty. But you know what, Gabby? Maybe you can dress the bears today. You know what?

Gabby: No, I'm not!

Teacher: You want to point the sun today?

Gabby: I don't.

Teacher: Here, let's read it. We can begin. Let's go. I — Let's read it first. "I can sit quietly. I can sit nice in..."

Boy: Circle.

Teacher: Circle, right, Max. Can you help her read it? "My friends and teacher like it when my voice is quiet."

Girl: Remember when Nicholas was here?

Teacher: Mm-hmm. Turn the page. "Screaming hurts my friends' ears."

Boy: Ears.

Teacher: Yep, hurts my friends' ears. They don't like that. "I can sing in circle. I can laugh in circle. And I can laugh at funny things in circle. Sometimes, I feel like yelling, but yelling and screaming..." What?

Boy: Hurts ears.

Teacher: Hurts ears.

Gabby: No, I'm not going to scream again.

Teacher: Okay, you're not going to scream anymore?

Gabby: No, I'm not.

Teacher: Want to finish the book? (Video ends)

Janie: So, that example with Gabby, this teacher used the social story to help remind Gabby of the behavioral expectations in circle time. She customized that for Gabby with photographs that she had taken, and it could be that Gabby was doing better in circle because she got mad about thinking that she didn't have a turn, but the teacher needed to remind her that everyone gets a turn, and together as they read the social story, it reminded her of those expectations, and this also provides a good example of peer support as well because you could see that other children were gathering around, listening to the story along with her, and giving Gabby some support and encouragement. Okay.

So, next, we're going to talk about Zola. Colin?

Colin: Yep. Okay. So, Zola is a 2 and a half-year-old with Down syndrome enrolled in a full-day program. Her heart condition causes her to fatigue easily and sleep deeply during nap time. Typically, she doesn't re-engage in the afternoon for play with other children. The program is concerned about Zola's inability to fully engage in the afternoon and has asked her parents to pick her up after lunch until she can make it through the whole day.

Janie: So, this is an example of out-of-school suspension. What are some of the teaching strategies that you might use to support Zola so that she can remain in the classroom and not have to go home for the afternoon? You know, I think this has to be really difficult for teachers. We want to protect children, and we want children to have the best possible experience that they can, but we also know that it's important that if parents feel as though their child really needs this experience, and their child is ready for it, then we need to value the parents' wishes.

So, I'm seeing some comments here, some simple comments about "Just let her sleep. Let her take a nap." Using activities that are quieter in the afternoon that allow her to rest. I see someone, Rick, suggested that you look into a behaviorist for Zola and maybe letting her stay in a quiet place and read while other kids might be doing some more active play. You know, I've always wondered, why is it that we don't believe that books can go outdoors, you know? There's no reason if it's time for outdoor play that we also take out a blanket with some books or other quiet games so that children have an opportunity for lots of different experiences and something that's just a little more okay for her to play. What other comments did you all see?

Colin: And I want to add — Oh, go ahead. I was just going to say I like what Maria Pimentel had to say about moving her to a quiet area and engaging her in an activity that she may like. I would also add to that — that, you know, if you're familiar with this scenario, you could start Zola in an area where other

children can transition to the after-nap-time activity while she has a slower transition or is able to do some quiet activities, so that's great insight.

Janie: That is a good point. I see Regina made a good observation that Zola is 2 and a half, so she would be in Early Head Start, and in Early Head Start, children are allowed to eat and sleep on demand. And so planning the days around the child and what her needs are is really the most supportive.

Colin: And I would also just like to add Kimberly Mather made a great point. She said that you should try to educate the teacher regarding Zola's medical needs and conditions and understanding Zola's level of full engagement in the afternoon is typical for her. So, oftentimes, those kinds of conversations beforehand communicated to the whole staff are what make the biggest difference, so I appreciate you sharing that.

Janie: That is a really good point. There's a lot of questions here that we might want to get answers from the parents or from health providers as well. Okay. Let's move on to Tina.

Colin: Okay. So, Tina is a nonverbal 4-year-old child with autism. During lunch and snack time, she becomes aggressive, pushing her teacher and others. Tina is strong, and her actions often make the adult step backwards.

Tina's mom is called and asked to pick her up early when this happens. Having to frequently leave work to pick Tina up has caused a problem for Tina's mom at her workplace, and she ultimately decided to withdraw Tina from the program.

Janie: This is an example of that soft-expulsion that we were talking about, practices that make it so that the program is not a viable option for the family, and so they choose to remove the child from the program. What kinds of things would you think about doing for Tina and her family? Keeping in mind that Tina is nonverbal, I think that's an important piece of this story to keep in mind. And we have Bethanne —

Colin: Well, I really like the suggestion from — Go ahead, Janie.

Janie: Oh, I was — We might've been wanting to point the same one out, Colin. I was looking at Bethanne's comment about doing observations to get a better sense of what her needs are.

Colin: Yeah, that's a great one, and I was also going to point out Christine Douglas' contribution of just using a visual organizer. A chart can be put up to explain so that Tina can show how she's feeling, so support so that she can communicate without using verbal skills, and we know from research that these kinds of supports can reduce frustration and then also reduce the amount of challenging behavior we see.

Janie: Absolutely. When we can't communicate, we find — can't communicate verbally, we find other ways to make our needs met, and I'm seeing a lot of folks really keying into that. I'm seeing a suggestion for using puppets. That's a good idea.

Colin: Yeah. I don't know that our audience members can see all the questions, so I'll just recognize a couple. Elena Bramble, Cynthia Askew, and Christie Galloway as well as Angel Wang all pointed out that text and other forms of visual supports would be a great way to address it, so thanks for those contributions.

Janie: Great. I see lots of questions too. I think, again, there are things missing from this picture. You know, what kinds of things are happening at home? What things do her parents do to communicate with Tina? What strategies have they tried already? Are there sensory issues? Are there too — Is there too much noise in the classroom? That's something that Melissa suggested, and lots of you suggested the use of visual cues as well, which is really important. Using sign language.

Colin: I was going to say quite a few people made a mention of doing a functional analysis, so what we sometimes refer to as the ABCs. I also think joining it to the other part of the scenario where sometimes, just a short conversation with the parents can give us insights into how similar situations are addressed in the home, and then we can join some of the procedures used at home and in school to make an even more successful behavior plan and then eliminate some of the challenges that are posed by, in this scenario, the parent having to move the child to another center.

Janie: That's a good point. I think what I remember so vividly from the presentation that Walter Gilliam did is that he never encountered a child that had been expelled from a program when the teacher and that child's parents had a good relationship.

So, it really is a way to prevent suspension and expulsion just through that relationship. We're going to share with you one more video clip, and this is a strategy to use for children that are nonverbal.

(Video begins)

Narrator: This video clip shows Luke, a 3-year-old boy with language delays, using his SpringBoard Communications device to ask his teacher for more food at mealtime.

Teacher: Please. Plate, please. Tell me with the SpringBoard.

Luke: I want...plate please.

Teacher: All right. I like the way you asked, Luke. Is it good, Luke? It is? All right. You like spaghetti too?

Girl: I like spaghetti.

Teacher: You like spaghetti too?

Girl: I like spaghetti too.

Teacher: Hmm?

Luke: Spoon.

Teacher: What's wrong with your spoon? What do you want with your spoon? Hmm?

Woman: Eat some lunch.

Girl: More spaghetti.

Luke: Spoon.

Teacher: Try some salad. What about the spoon? Hold your head up and eat, sweetie.

Luke: Spoon. Spoon. Spaghetti.

Teacher: What do you want, Luke?

Woman: No. He said, "Spaghetti."

Teacher: What do you want?

Luke: More.

Teacher: More what?

Luke: Spaghetti.

Teacher: More spaghetti...

Luke: Please.

Teacher: Thank you.

[Children speaking indistinctly] (Video ends)

Janie: So, you can see that the teacher still had very high expectations for Luke. Even though he was using a communications board, she expected him to ask the questions using the proper words, not just asking with the word spoon, and she even required him to say, "please," so manners were included as well. I think it's important when we have adaptations for children with disabilities that we also include the highest expectations that we can. Now we're running short on time, so Colin is going to move us through our final scenario pretty quickly.

Colin: Okay. No now we're going to talk about Tyrell. Tyrell is a 4-year-old with a sensory integration disorder. He is particularly sensitive to loud noises. One day, the fire alarm when off while Tyrell was using the bathroom. Now, Tyrell soils his pants at least once most days because he doesn't want to go into the bathroom anymore. Tyrell's family was told he must be able to consistently use the bathroom if they want him to attend the program.

So, in this scenario, what are some of the teaching strategies that you would use to support Tyrell? And some people in the last scenario shared some pretty good insights into how to address this, in particular, using the functional behavior assessment or that ABC form to figure out what the function of the child's behavior is.

Janie: Yeah, that's a good point. There were concerns that maybe Tina might have some sensory issues, so we saw some good strategies there. This is something that I encountered in my own life. My child was afraid of those automatic-flush toilets. He called them scary potties, and so we had to go through a process of getting him to be comfortable with that over time. I see Mary Ellen is suggesting a social story. That's a great idea. Cody says there's a social story on fire safety that could be helpful because there are going to be loud noises. You know, fire alarms will happen.

Reintroducing the bathroom when it's not bathroom time. Letting him wear headphones or earmuffs when he goes to the bathroom. These are great ideas. Preparing him with what's in the room, what to expect, and doing some practice drills. Those are fabulous. Okay. Well, one other suggestion is that the importance of children being able to talk about their feelings. Now, if Tyrell has the chance, since he is 4,to be able to explain what he's feeling, it oftentimes can make that feeling less stressful and less

intense. A lot of times when we name what's happening with us, it gives us a sense of comfort and safety. So, these are some feeling pictures that you can use.

There's all kinds of great suggestions on this website that you see on the screen for how to incorporate this practice of learning about feelings, talking about feelings, and sharing with each other what feelings look like on your face and what feelings feel like in your body so that when it comes to a point where there's anxiety or intense feelings, children have those words that they can use to describe them.

So, which of these teaching practices do you think will be most effective for your situation? We got social stories. I saw a lot of social-story suggestions even in the other two scenarios. Communication devices. We talked about fidget toys, feeling charts and activities, visual cues, peer support, environmental modification, stress management, and wellness activities for teachers.

So, important that we consider how our teachers are feeling in these situations and how we can support them as we do to support children. And so we have 43 percent of you think that social stories might be helpful to you in your situation, and I see lots of folks looking at fidget toys as well, feelings charts and visual cues, and a lot of folks are saying we need stress management and wellness activities for teachers. I think that is so true, absolutely. Okay. Now I'm going to turn it back over to Anita, and she's going to tell us about some program strategies to consider.

Anita: Hi, again, everyone. I just want to make sure that we — that we address programmatic strategies that will reduce the likelihood that we will have to engage in suspension and expulsions, and I loved reading the comments in the group chat as they came up because many of you — when Colin and Janie were talking about strategies, many of you mentioned some of these that are on the slide. Developing strong partnerships with families, making sure you have a good communication line between home and school, that you bring families in to the process of helping to think of some things that might work or what's working at home that they can try in school.

So, many of you mentioned those kind of things, and as a programmatic strategy, building on those family partnerships and making sure we have strong relationships and strong partnerships with families is a key here as we develop program-wide strategies to reduce suspension and expulsion or to eliminate it. And other suggestions I saw was work with your LEA or your Part C provider, your early intervention.

Having those strong relationships with other professionals that can help support you, those are — From your mental-health perspective, getting that involvement, having them help with gathering data about what's happening in the classroom, giving some feedback to you, working more closely with your LEA, having strong memorandums of understanding as you work to say who's going to do what, and do we need more training for staff? Do we need more on-site support? Do we need more modeling from teachers of record? Can we have the early intervention provide therapy in the classroom or in the home setting? Working within the MOU and help strengthening of the programmatic things that can be done to help support that child continue to be included in the program.

And again, having strong supports available for staff. What kind of wellness program do you have available? And then in addition, we have to have strong, clear, and consistent policies in place defining it for us, having a strong inclusion policy, making sure everybody is aware of that. And lastly to help develop your program-wide strategies is to make sure you're aware of things that may inadvertently cause those suspension and expulsions that you're trying to reduce or eliminate, and those are four

drivers of suspension and expulsion to be aware of — structural quality, lack of knowledge of child development on staff's part, the racial disparities, as well as trauma, how trauma impacts learning.

So, we want to make sure that those four drivers, that, you know, lack of knowledge sometimes gets in the way of what young children should know and be able to do at specific age levels, and we want to make sure that we're addressing those four and making sure we understand how trauma effects behavior in the classroom. So, I'm now going to turn it back over to Janie to wind us up. Thank you.

Janie: Okay. Thank you, Anita. We were worried. We knew we had a lot of content to cover, and we know that we're at time right now, but we just wanted to remind you that you can download the PowerPoint. The information about the drivers that Anita was briefly sharing is really well spelled out in the PowerPoint, so please feel free to download that and use it. And then we also want to point your attention to the resources. There are a number of resources on the PowerPoint that can link you to more information about this topic.

So, thank you all so much for participating in the webinar. We hope that you've gotten some good information and some concrete recommendations for your work. This link will take you to an evaluation, and when you complete the evaluation, you'll get a certificate of attendance. So, please make sure that you click on the link and give us your feedback so that we can share with you the kind of information that you need in the future. So, thanks again, everyone. Have a good afternoon!

Colin: Thank you, everyone. Thanks, Janie and Anita.

Anita: Thank you, everyone. I'm so glad you were able to attend today. And thanks, Janie and Colin, for great facilitation and discussion.

Janie: Okay, bye, everyone.